



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 12 January 2021

by S J Lee BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/D/20/3260445
63 Kingston Street, Cambridge CB1 2NU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Dr Elizabeth Durham against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01573/HFUL, dated 8 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion, which includes two roof lights on the front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Mill Road Area Conservation Area (MRCA).

Reasons

3. The appeal relates to a terraced dwelling within the MRCA. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. This is reflected in paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which states that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.
4. The Mill Road Area Conservation Area Appraisal (MRCAA)(2011) places the site within the Mill Road and St Matthews Character Area. The area is characterised as a late 19th century residential suburb with continuous lines of terraced streets, with houses fronting onto the pavement and small concealed gardens to the rear. The host property is identified as a 'positive unlisted building', along with the majority of terraced houses in the area. The layout and appearance of the terraces are clearly important elements of the character of the conservation area and make a positive contribution to its significance.
5. The development would take up the full width of the dwelling, filling the gap between the chimneys. There would also be little to no set back from the eaves or roof ridge. Due to its size and the lack of space around it, the development would appear as an unduly large and bulky feature that would completely dominate the roof slope. In effect, it would appear as a third storey. This would

detract from the simple terrace character of the property and be an unsympathetic addition to the dwelling and wider area. In turn, this would diminish the contribution the property makes to the character, appearance and significance of the MRCA.

6. My attention has been drawn to a number of existing dormers in the vicinity of the site. The appellant has provided the officer reports for those permitted at No 51 and No 69. The example at No 51 is set back from the eaves and ends of what appears to be an extended roof slope. As such, it does not appear as an unduly dominant feature. This is also the view expressed in the officer report. It therefore differs to the proposal, which I have concluded would overwhelm the roof slope. This example does not therefore add significant weight in favour of the proposal.
7. I acknowledge that the officer report for No 69 concludes that it would not be harmful owing to other similar features in the area. There are however some differences in appearance between this and the development. In particular, the existing dormer is not constrained on either side by chimneys. Conversely, the proposed development would appear to have been squeezed in between the chimneys. In my view, this would emphasise the lack of space around the feature and its visually overbearing presence. It would also appear more cramped. No 69 also benefits from a two-storey flat roofed extension, which alters the appearance of the rear of the dwelling and adds a degree of articulation. The overall appearance of the dwelling therefore differs to that of the appeal site. While the host dwelling is extended at the ground floor, the first floor and roof retains the original character of the dwelling. As a result, I consider the development would be more harmful than that at No 69. Consequently, this example also adds little weight in favour of the development.
8. With regard to the other examples in the area, I saw that not all are of the same scale or type as the proposal. I also have little or no evidence regarding the circumstances under which most were permitted. Nevertheless, many of the examples I saw tend to confirm that dormers of this scale and type have the potential to detract from the original character of the dwellings. Similarly, roof extensions of this type are also still in the minority, with the majority of terraced dwellings maintaining their original character. While I acknowledge that dormers and roof extensions are not necessarily unusual features, this does not mean that any and all such proposals will be acceptable. In my view, the examples referred to do not justify a harmful development in its own right or the further erosion of the character and appearance of the area.
9. In coming to this conclusion, I have had regard to the position of the development to the rear of the dwelling. It would not be a highly prominent feature in the street scene. This would provide a degree of mitigation for the harm caused. However, it would be visible from parts of Hooper Street, where it would be seen in context with other dormers, particularly that at No 69. Nevertheless, this would only be likely to draw attention to the cumulative impact on the character of the terrace. The unsympathetic nature of the development would also be discernible from the private views of neighbours. The use of appropriate materials would also not mitigate the harm caused.
10. I therefore find that the development would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the MRCA. Accordingly, there would be conflict

with Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policies 58 and 61. These seek, amongst other things, to ensure alterations to buildings are of an appropriate scale and design to complement the built form and do not adversely impact on the character or appearance of heritage assets.

11. The harm to the significance of the MRCA would be 'less than substantial'. In this context, paragraph 196 of the Framework requires the harm caused by development to be balanced against any public benefits. I shall address this matter below.

Other Matters & Planning Balance

12. The development would provide an additional bedroom, which would clearly be of benefit to the appellant. However, the benefits derived from this would be private in nature and thus do not weigh against the harm to the Conservation Area. In general terms, there is also nothing to suggest that similar benefits could not be achieved in a less harmful manner. There would be no harm to the living conditions of neighbours. Nevertheless, a lack of harm is neutral and weighs neither for nor against the development.
13. Having regard to the above, there are no public benefits in this case which outweigh the less than substantial harm identified. Neither are there any other material considerations that would justify a decision other than in accordance with the Development Plan.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S J Lee

INSPECTOR